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ABSTRACT

This booklet for parents explains the Talents Unlimited (TU) program, a program that is designed to help students use more of their thinking powers. Research is showing that students possess potential for many kinds of thinking abilities that are important for success in the world of work as well as in school. These talents include, in addition to academic talent: (1) productive thinking, which enables a child to look at a problem creatively; (2) communication, which involves six related skills that help students describe and communicate; (3) planning; (4) forecasting talent, which is the ability to look into the past to see causes or into the future to make predictions; and (5) decision making. Academic talent is the foundation for a quality education. The other talent areas require that students go beyond the recall level and think about the academic content in more challenging ways. In fact, the TU teacher always has an academic purpose for each talents activity in the classroom. Examples are given of the ways teachers might have students use the various talents, and the skills that make up the talents are described. (SLD)

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Peek inside....

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TALENTS UNLIMITED
MOBILE, ALABAMA

A Talents Unlimited Classroom

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Peek inside....

A Talents Unlimited Classroom

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Dear Parents and Guardians,

You may have already heard something about Talents from your child. This booklet has been designed to give you an overall look at the Talents Unlimited thinking skills program and how Talents teachers can use it to help students understand academic subjects in the classroom.

We appreciate your interest in the Talents Unlimited program. If you would like more information about Talents or the research on its effectiveness, write us at Talents Unlimited, Inc.; 109 South Cedar Street; Mobile, Alabama 36602 or call (334) 690-8060.

Sincerely,

Brenda Haskew and the Talents Staff

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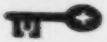
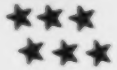
The Talents Logo

The Talents Unlimited logo illustrates the meaning of the Talents Unlimited program. Each symbol on the logo has a special significance:

The LAMP		stands for the knowledge children acquire in all subject areas;
The KEY		stands for the opening of new doors to learning as children use their different talents;
The SUNRISE		stands for increasing opportunities for every child to be a star performer;
The STARS		stand for the many, different talents which can be developed in each child.

INTRODUCTION

The thinking abilities of our children represent the most valuable resource of our nation. For many years in education, much of this resource has been wasted because only one kind of thinking talent, the academic, has received attention.

Now, research is showing that boys and girls possess potential for many kinds of thinking abilities which are important to success in the work-a-day world as well as in school. These talents include Productive Thinking, Communication, Planning , Forecasting, and Decision Making, in addition to the Academic talent.

The aim of this program is to demonstrate how the research on multiple talents can be made a part of the existing school program so that students can begin using more of their thinking powers. This program does not take the place of learning academic skills. Instead, students are given increasing opportunities to learn academic information using many, different ways of thinking rather than just one way.

ACADEMIC TALENT

The Academic talent provides the foundation for a quality education. This is the talent that your child uses when (s)he recalls the names of American presidents, adds a column of numbers, takes a spelling test, corrects the punctuation in a story, recalls facts about rocks after reading a chapter in Science, and matches artists with their paintings on a worksheet. There are right and wrong answers to an Academic activity. Skill in this kind of thinking is essential for a quality education. A child cannot be successful thinking creatively or critically without information upon which to base his/her thinking.

These activities make use of a student's Academic talent:

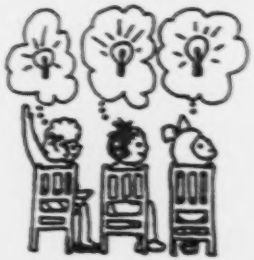
Geography - Map Skills: Label the continents of the world.

Math - Multiplication: Solve the following problem: 12 X 2 =_____ .

In them, a child is asked to recall information. The other five talent areas require student to go beyond the recall level and think about the academic content in more challenging ways. However, the Talents teacher always has an academic purpose for each Talents activity that occurs in the classroom.

PRODUCTIVE THINKING TALENT

Every day we look for NEW ways to make life better, safer, more interesting, and more enjoyable. To think of the ideas for these changes, we use our Productive Thinking talent. When a child uses Productive Thinking in the classroom, (s)he produces a list of ideas or an unique design. The focus of this talent is on originality, thinking of something that no one else in the class has thought of.



When someone uses the Productive Thinking talent, (s)he must be a kind of INVENTOR who thinks of new ideas and new ways of looking at a problem creatively.

Here are examples of ways a teacher might have students use their **Productive Thinking** talent to understand academic content:

- As a kindergarten teacher helping his/her students to be aware of school as a part of the community (Social Studies) might teach her class "Mary Had a Little Lamb". Then (s)he could have students use Productive Thinking to think of many, varied, unusual things Mary could bring to school, besides the lamb.

- A fourth grade Science teacher focusing on change in matter could ask a small group of students to use Productive Thinking to list many, varied, unusual examples of physical change in matter.

- A sixth grade Literature student could use Productive Thinking to create an original design for a poster with many, varied, unusual features to advertise his/her class's production of "Midsummer Night's Dream".

COMMUNICATION TALENT

Being able to effectively communicate ideas, needs, and feelings to other people is important for success in today's world. When a student uses the Communication talent in the classroom, (s)he produces either oral language, written language, or non-verbal language.

The Communication talent involves six different, but related, skills. These skills are closely connected to the academic classroom curriculum.

Communication talent skill # 1

When a child uses the first Communication skill, (s)he thinks of many, varied, single words to describe something. This skill encourages a child to use all his/her senses as (s)he thinks of descriptive adjectives.

For example: A third grade class may be engaged in a unit on fables in Language Arts. Before reading the fable "Madame Rhinoceros and Her Dress" from Arnold Lobel's book, Fables, the teacher shows the class the picture of Madame Rhinoceros in her dress. (The full length, colorful dress had polka dots, many bows, large ruffles, stiff cuffs, full gathers, bright flowers, and lace-trimmed collar.) Then, she might ask students to use their Communication talent behavior #1 to orally share many, varied, single words to describe this dress.

Students may share descriptive adjectives such as gaudy, bright, uncomfortable, ridiculous, etc.

The teacher then shares the fable which focuses on the power of flattery.

Here are other examples of ways a teacher might have students use their **Communication talent skill #1** to understand academic content through the use of descriptive adjectives:

- A first grade teacher leading her class through a study of living and non-living things, brings in a small potted plant and a rock. As the plant is passed around the room, (s)he asks students to use their Communication talent skill #1 to think of many, varied, single words to describe the plant. (S)he guides their observation and records their words on a chart. As the rock is passed around, (s)he asks students to use their Communication skill #1 to share many, varied, single words to describe the rock. (S)he records these words on a different chart. Then, the class compares the two lists of adjectives to arrive at characteristics of living and non-living things.

- In a fifth grade study of the executive branch of government in Social Studies, the class is divided into groups with a piece of chart paper, marker, and a picture of one of the presidents of the United States. Each group uses their Communication talent skill #1 to list many, varied, single words to describe the president. Later, the whole class compares and contrasts the charts to determine the characteristics of an effective leader.

Communication talent skill #2

When a child uses the second Communication skill, (s)he thinks of many, varied, single words to describe feelings.

For example: A fourth grade Science class might research the life and accomplishments of Alexander Graham Bell when studying about sound. The teacher asks the students to use Communication talent skill #2 to share many, varied, single words to describe how he might have felt when discovered that his invention, the telephone, worked.

Later, students could use Communication talent skill #2 to list many, varied, single words to describe how Alexander Graham Bell might feel if he learned of current advances in telecommunications.

Here are other examples of ways a teacher might have students use their Communication talent skill #2 to understand academic content using adjectives that describe feelings:

- A second grade teacher helping her students to understand how the scarcity of resources requires people to make choices about goods and services in Social Studies class might share the story, The Ox-cart Man by Donald Hall. After the father in the story had sold all the items the family had made all year long, he bought each member of the family a small, practical gift and walked home to the farm. Each member of the family then set about making items to sell the next year. The teacher could ask the students to use their Communication talent skill #2 to give many, varied, single words to describe how the family might feel as they worked to create the items that the father sold at market each year.

- Students can also use Communication skill #2 in a more whimsical way to think about how something might feel in an academically-based situation. A fifth grade Science class focusing on recycling as a means for conservation of resources might use Communication skill #2 to give many, varied, single words to describe how a soft drink can might feel if it were recycled.

Communication talent skill #3

This skill helps a child express comparisons in his/her world using the form of similes. When encouraging a student to use this skill, the teacher provides a simile sentence stem in a special format to help the student focus on the task.

For example: A kindergarten teacher spotting a rainbow in the sky after a shower, might reinforce her students' use of language with the Communication skill #3 sentence stem:

The rainbow is colorful like.....

The students finish the sentence stem with things that are colorful like a rainbow such as:

The rainbow is colorful like...a new box of crayons.

The rainbow is colorful like...a bouquet of spring flowers.

The rainbow is colorful like...my plate of food on Thanksgiving.

Here are other examples of ways a teacher might have students use their Communication talent skill #3 to understand academic content through the use of simile comparisons:

- Sixth grade students learning about hallucinogens in a drug education class, might use their Communication talent skill #3 to list many, varied things in their world which are unpredictable like hallucinogens. Each student writes as many comparisons as (s)he can think of to finish the simile sentence stem:

  Hallucinogens are unpredictable like....

- First grade students learning about the identity property of addition ($x + 0 = x$) can be reinforced and motivated by using their Communication talent skill #3 to compare many, varied things that area as easy as adding zero (0) to a number. The class orally finishes the simile sentence stem :

  Adding zero (0) to a number is as easy as .....

Communication talent skill #4

This Communication skill helps a child empathize with another person or a character in a story. In this kind of activity, a student has the opportunity to share a personal experience which relates to the situation in which another person or character finds him/herself.

For example: A third grade Science class learning about the major parts of the solar system, might read about Neil Armstrong, the first person to walk on the moon. The class discusses that Americans were the first to accomplish this and comment on how patriotic he felt at that moment. The teacher suggests that students could use their Communication talent skill #4 to write in their journal about a time when they have felt patriotic like Neil Armstrong did when he walked on the moon.

A student might write about a time when (s)he felt patriotic while watching a fourth of July fireworks show. Another student might write about feeling patriotic as (s)he raised the American flag on the flagpole at the school.

Here are other examples of ways a teacher might have students use their Communication talent skill #4 to understand academic content through empathy:

- A second grade Social Studies class learning about important historical figures who have had an impact on our society may read ...If You Grew Up with Abraham Lincoln by Ann McGovern. In this book, students hear that when Abe Lincoln was seventeen, he cut wood to earn enough cloth to make a white shirt and he split rails for fences in other to earn enough cloth for pants, not the buckskin breeches he usually wore. Working so hard to get something he wanted may have made Lincoln feel diligent. Students could offer to use their Communication talent behavior #4 to orally share a time when they have felt diligent by working hard to get something they wanted.

- A fourth grade class reading the Newbery Medal-winning classic, Island of the Blue Dolphins by Scott O'Dell, might reflect on how loyal Karana might have felt after she dove from the ship into the sea to swim back to the island where her brother stood alone on the shore. On a voluntary basis, students use their Communication talent skill #4 to write about a situation when they have felt loyal to someone important to them.

Communication talent skill #5

When a child uses this thinking skill, (s)he composes a network of language, that is, complete thoughts that work together in an oral or written form. Some examples of oral forms might be an interview, a conversation, or dictating a story about a class experience. There are many forms a student could use when utilizing his/her Communication talent skill #5 in a written form. (S)he could write a first draft of a poem, a report, song lyrics, or a letter. It is important to note that these are not products ready for publication. After a student uses Communication talent skill #5 to compose the report, for example, (s)he must shift to the Academic talent to revise and edit the report for correct spelling, punctuation, etc. However, without the use of this talent skill to create the language of the first draft, there would be nothing to edit or revise.

For example: A kindergarten class might use Communication talent skill #5 to dictate their own version of the story, Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? by Bill Martin, Jr. The teacher writes their story on poster board. The students later read their story together and illustrate it.

Many teachers use Communication talent skill #5 outside of the Language Arts content area to help students understand concepts through the use of oral or written language forms.

- Each student in a fifth grade Social Studies class focusing on the Revolutionary War could use his/her Communication talent skill #5 to write the first draft of a persuasive letter that a person in support of the Patriots might write to a person in support of the Loyalists (or vice versa) to convince him/her to change his/her position.

- Second grade students developing their ability to subtract numbers with regrouping could use their Communication talent skill #5 to orally explain to a partner how to solve a particular subtraction problem. The teacher listens as (s)he walks around the room to pick up on student misunderstanding of this mathematical process.

Communication talent skill #6

This thinking skill calls for students to use non-verbal communication to share thoughts, feelings, and needs.

For example: A teacher of a third grade Science class could ask small groups of students to use their Communication talent skill #6 to cooperatively create a collage illustrating different uses for plants. The students may not talk or write to one another, but must rely only on body language to communicate.

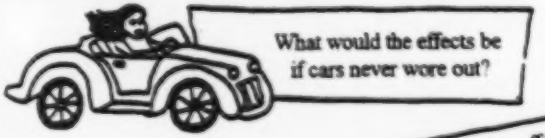
Here are other examples of ways a teacher might have students use their Communication talent skill #6 to understand academic content through non-verbal communication:

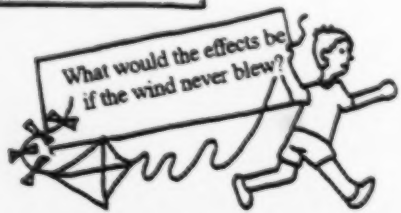
- A first grade teacher in Math class might ask a student to use Communication talent skill #6 to manipulate plastic chips in two sets to equal a total of nine, without talking.

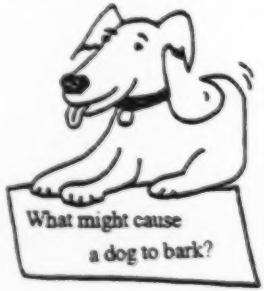
- A fourth grade PE teacher might ask students to individually use Communication talent skill #6 to create a non-verbal Native American dance celebrating a successful hunt.

FORECASTING TALENT

The Forecasting talent is a thought process which asks a child to look into the past to suggest what might have logically caused a situation to occur or to look into the future and make predictions about the logical effects a certain situation might have.







There are two different skills within the Forecasting talent. Teacher use of these skills with students is closely connected to the academic classroom curriculum.

Forecasting talent skill #1

When a child uses this thinking skill, (s)he thinks of many, different things which might have caused a particular situation to occur.

For example: A sixth grade Social Studies teacher might ask small groups of students who are learning about the interpretation of physical archeological evidence to use Forecasting skill #1 to predict many, varied causes for human figures to rarely appear in early cave paintings.

Here are some examples of situations when a teacher might ask students to use their Forecasting talent skill #1 to learn academic content:

- A kindergarten teacher reciting the nursery rhyme, "Little Boy Blue" might ask students to use their Forecasting talent skill #1 to predict many, varied causes for Little Boy Blue to have fallen asleep.

- Prior to a Science unit on water pollution, a second grade teacher might probe the students' prior knowledge by asking them to use their Forecasting talent skill #1 to predict many, varied causes for a river to be polluted.

Forecasting talent skill #2

A child uses this thinking skill when (s)he thinks of many, varied effects which might occur because of a certain situation.

For example: A first grade teacher instructing his/her class on the monetary value of coins and dollars might ask the students to use their Forecasting talent skill #2 to predict many, varied effects if there were no bills in our money system, only coins.

Here are other classroom opportunities when a teacher might ask students to use their Forecasting talent skill #2 to learn academic content:

- After introducing the concept of common and proper nouns to his/her third grade students, a Language Arts teacher might ask students to use Forecasting talent skill #2 to predict many, varied effects if there were no proper nouns.

- A fifth grade music teacher helping students to develop an awareness of basic expressive musical signs might ask them to use Forecasting talent skill #2 to predict many, varied effects if all music were played *forte* (loudly).

DECISION MAKING TALENT

In everyone's life there is a need to make countless decisions. Some are of a spit-second nature, while others have impacts which are long-range in nature. A Talents teacher helps students learn to make thoughtful, accountable decisions through activities which relate to academic studies. The teacher guides the students in thinking of alternatives, so that each one is as acceptable as another. Guidance is also provided as students generate relevant criteria questions. After weighing the alternatives against the criteria questions, the students choose. After choosing, the student must defend his/her choice with reasons based, at least in part, on the criteria questions.

For example: A fourth grade teacher may ask students to use their Decision Making talent to decide which format their home state Social Studies project will take: a mobile, a diorama, a poster, or an informative speech. The teacher may work with students to develop the following criteria to help them make their decision: How well does this format show the information that I have found about my home state? How easy will it be to get the materials for this format? How much will I like using this format to show the information that I have found about my home state?

Here are other classroom opportunities when a teacher could ask students to use their Decision Making talent to learn or reinforce academic content:

- After sharing the book, Have You Seen My Cat? By Eric Carle, with his/her kindergarten students, the teacher might have the students use their Decision Making talent to make a class decision on the topic for their own spin-off of this book to be entitled, Have You Seen My ( )? The students could decide from alternatives such as hat, book, and toy. The criteria students might use to help them make the decision could be: Is this something I could easily lose? Do I want to learn to read this word? Could I cut pictures of this from magazines?

- The teacher of sixth grade Math students focuses on having students organize and display data using various types of graphs. The class gathers their information to display by using their Decision Making talent to identify the most important invention of all time. Students may develop criteria such as: How labor/time-saving is this invention? How available is this invention? Is there something special for me about this invention?

PLANNING TALENT

Plans are made by people who are engaged in all kinds of tasks: construction, banking, teaching, landscaping, sales, etc. Plans can be simple or complex.

A Talents teacher helps child learn to be organized and thoughtful in planning classroom activities to learn or reinforce academic content. This instruction sets a child up for independence and success in real life situations.

For example: A second grade Science teacher may guide her students in using their Planning talent to create a plan to chart daily weather conditions for a week.

Here are other classroom opportunities when a teacher could ask students to use their Planning talent to learn or reinforce academic content:

- A first grade art class uses their Planning talent to write a class plan for finger painting a picture using more than one color.

- A fifth grade Social Studies teacher could ask her students to use their Planning talent in small groups to plan to make a poster to show the patterns of growth of the United States.